

UPASAKA AN SHI'S DISCOURSE ON THE FORTY EIGHT INQUIRIES OF NON VIOLENCE

戒殺四十八問英文版

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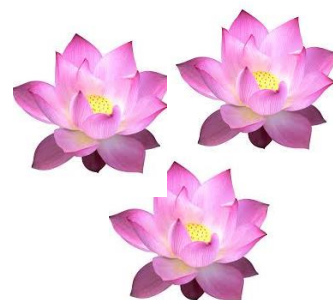


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Brian Chung

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be
converted and brought towards the Way.
All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.
The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be clear.
Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.
Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.
Society will be prosperous and peaceful.
Soldiers and arms will be of no use.
Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.
All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.
Society will be free from thieves and bandits.
There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.
The powerful will not exploit the weak.
Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

-Infinite Life Sutra

DEDICATION OF MERIT

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father and Elders
bring forth the heart
of understanding and compassion and,
at the end of this life,**



be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.



UPASAKA ZHOU AN SHI

INTRODUCTION

Upasaka Zhou An Shi was an eminent Qing dynasty Buddhist and the author of the An Shi Quan Shu (安士全書). The An Shi Quan Shu—his magnum opus collection of Sagely works—is considered no less important than the Analects of Confucius or the sutras of the Buddha. Upasaka An Shi masterfully combines the true spirit of the important teachings of Mencius, Confucius and Lao Tzu with profound Mahayana Buddhist principles. Thus, his masterpiece fully captures the spirit of Chinese Buddhism and the vision of the Buddha and Sages. Hence, it is no surprise that Patriarch Master Yin Guang printed over three million copies of this work!

Upasaka An Shi wrote this Discourse on the Forty-Eight Inquiries of Non Violence to enlighten people on the harmfulness of slaughtering and eating meat. Thus, this discourse forms an important section of the An Shi Quan Shu. Furthermore, this edition covers the most important 33 out of the total of 48 inquiries. The missing 15 questions have not yet been translated from classical Chinese to modern Chinese. Nevertheless, these 33 represent the most important out of the 48.

FOREWORD BY UPASAKA AN SHI

Whenever slaughter and death comes calling, it is always a pitiful scene. A human being may not meet violence or conflict for tens of years or even hundreds of years. However, the horror of slaughter happens daily to animals. Everyday, as soon as sunrise, knife wielding butchers loom over livestock while hunters prowl the land. Even though animals cry out for help, their efforts are always in vain. These rakshasas masked as humans repeatedly disembowel and boil, inflicting great pain and suffering on animals of all kinds. It takes only a short span of time for hundreds of millions of animals to lose their lives.

As animals have no recourse against the never-ending slaughter, they must silently swallow their grievances. This leads to a dismal atmosphere of mounting evil karma. Eventually, as the evil karma of killing accumulates to the limit, demon kings will descend into the human realm as a response.

The Zen Master Ci Shou once said: "As a result of the sin of animal slaughter, violence and wars will break out. Those who have taken life will in turn lose their lives. Those who have maliciously refused to repay their debts will lose their homes in the chaos. Furthermore, those who have destroyed burrows and nests will have their family members scattered. Each sin will result in the appropriate retribution. Thus, do not fail to heed the Buddha's words."

Therefore, violence and wars are caused by the evil karma of killing. If we are faced with impending violence or conflict, the only recourse is to abstain from killing. The merits from such abstinence is the most potent and materializes speedily. Other good deeds cannot match it.

Thus, I have composed this scroll of questions and answers regarding non-violence. I wish to answer people's doubts regarding this matter and convince everyone to abstain from killing animals. Furthermore, I hope everyone will recite **Namo Amitabha** and dedicate the resulting merits to the souls of the animals we have killed in the past. We should never again kill. Moreover, we should give rise to the heart of Great Compassion and vow to exercise great forbearance. Henceforth, we should not dare to kill even the smallest creature. I vow that if you do as instructed but are unable to avoid conflict and violence, the Celestial Dragons and Vajra Dharma Protectors may have my head!

-Upasaka Zhou An Shi (周安士居士)

Translators Notes:

The name of Amita Buddha is a mantra of supreme importance. In fact, these two words are the single most important Dharma the Buddha has spoken, it surpasses in importance all other mantras and sutras. By itself, this Buddha's name can be considered the sum of every Dharma the Buddha has taught during his entire life. This is not an exaggeration as eminent Dharma Masters of both past and present—such as Patriarch Yin Guang, Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu, Upasaka Xia Lian Ju and Ven. Master Chin Kung—have all said the same.

According to the Contemplation Sutra, just a single sincere recitation of Amita Buddha can eradicate eight billion eons worth of karmic offenses. Furthermore, according to Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra, Amita Buddha has vowed that:

Amita Buddha's Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Therefore, Amita Buddha guarantees that any sentient being who merely perceives his name or recites it will at the very least be reborn as an aristocrat possessing wealth, knowledge and power. Furthermore, they will also have healthy bodies and be able to cultivate the highest Dharma.

However, these generous karmic benefits still only represent the fringe benefits derived from reciting Amita Buddha's name. Those who can recite it single-mindedly can reap the profound benefits that makes the Dharma-door of Amitabha the foremost Dharma-door. In short, those who can recite this name single-mindedly can attain rebirth in Pureland (i.e. enlightenment) as soon as ten recitations have been uttered.

For more information, please read the excellent Pureland resources included at the end of this translation.

THE DISCOURSE ON THE FORTY EIGHT INQUIRIES OF NON VIOLENCE

1.) Question: The ancients have said that Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, and mankind is the paragon of all beings. Therefore, animals are certainly created by Heaven for the benefit of mankind. Thus, why not kill?

Answer: As Heaven and Earth are the mother of all living beings, all animals are the beloved offspring of Heaven and Earth. No mother can be happy if among her children, the strong bully the weak and the successful exploit the poor. If you eat meat and feel that it is your right to do so, then by this logic, as tigers can eat humans and mosquitoes suck our blood—are humans not created by Heaven to nourish beasts and pests?

2.) Question: If animal slaughter is an offense, why does Heaven not inflict punishment to deter such conduct?

Answer: Heaven is definitely against animal slaughter. Thus, the karmic retributions for hunting and slaughtering are actually numerous and fully visible. However, the foolish fail to heed these warnings and the intelligent willfully refuse to change their behavior. Thus, there is really nothing more Heaven can do.

For instance, in 1851, a native of Quanjiao County dreamed of a celestial deity who warned him that: "An army is fast approaching your residence! If you do not cease slaughtering animals, you cannot hope to escape death!" After he awoke, he and his entire household burned incense and vowed that they would never slaughter or hunt again. No one breached their vows....except for one dissenting matron. She said to him: "You simply had a dream, we cannot be sure if it is true or not." A few days later, the violence of the Taiping rebellion spilled into their hometown. Everyone managed to escape except for the matron, who had delayed leaving the family compound and was killed. The native and his family members personally brought this incident to my attention.

Translators Notes:

According to Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra (the part describing the karmic offense of killing):

"People of this world are driven to kill by their desires. The strong abuse the weak and the victorious massacre the defeated. They hunt, slaughter and devour. Thus, karmic retributions naturally follow. That is why some are orphaned, poor, lonely, wicked, blind, disfigured, deaf, mute, deranged, weak, deformed or crude. They had rejected virtue in their past lives and refused to be charitable. The fundamental truth is that nobility, wealth, courage, grace, wisdom and eloquence are the result of kindness and filial piety. Only merits and good deeds can yield such wholesome results."

Thus, most of the ills of this world are caused by acts of killing. The reason people suffer from deformities, mental illnesses, misery and painful medical conditions is because they have killed in the past or in this life. If you look around you, you will see that intelligence, wealth and nobility belong only to a few while deprivation, sickness and suffering are widespread. This is because only a few have abstained from taking life during their past lives while most did not. Therefore, bliss naturally becomes a rarity in a sea of suffering.

However, most people foolishly or willfully ignore these warnings and continue to indulge in meat. Thus, we must open our eyes. We must look around us and take heed of the words of Upasaka An Shi and the Buddha.

3.) Question: There are so many animals in the world. If no one hunts or slaughters, wouldn't their populations grow out of control?

Answer: There are plenty of insects and animals that humans do not eat or kill ; their numbers are numerous without issue. Furthermore, the reason there are so many beasts and animals is due to the karma of killing. Animal rebirth is caused by the cycle of retribution and revenge. People who kill animals are reborn as animals to even up the debt. If everyone abstains from taking animal life, the karma that supports the realm of animals will gradually dissipate while the ranks of devas and men will increase. For instance, if people do not trap frogs, the population of frogs will decrease. Likewise, if people do not fish for crabs, the population of crabs will gradually decrease. Thus, the laws of karma are quite clear.

Translator's Notes:

What Upasaka An Shi mentions in this answer is particularly important. People often think that hunting or culling are justifiable because doing so controls animal

populations. However, killing actually cause the unwanted populations to increase, as those who kill will be reborn as what they used to kill to be killed themselves.

4.) Question: If Heaven wishes for mankind to refrain from eating meat, then why isn't the meat of animals disgusting and foul as a deterrence?

Answer: The truth is that Heaven already considers meat to be foul and disgusting. However, people believe the taste of meat to be delicious— like how maggots revel in putrid feces. As this is a matter of deep-rooted habits, it is difficult to change perceptions. For instance, if a man was a cat in his past life, he would have craved for rodents during that life. Likewise, if a man was a crane in his past life, he would've craved for snakes. However, as they are now men, they no longer yearn for rats and snakes. Thus, each body has its own habits. Variations in preferences and habits are due to karma, causes and conditions. Differences in karma, causes and conditions are in turn caused by differing intentions. If people's hearts and intentions can accord with Heaven's will, they will naturally understand that meat is indeed foul and disgusting.

5.) Question: There are many who eke out a living by fishing or working in the meat packing industry. If we exhort them to change professions, we would be causing them financial ruin. Isn't it unreasonable to favor animals over humans?

Answer: Those who support themselves in such a manner are like a man who eats poisoned meat to satiate his hunger. Even though they may be able to live comfortably off the earnings for a while, they will soon have to undergo many kalpas of excruciating karmic retribution. The reason we urge hunters, fishermen, ranchers, butchers and so forth to change professions is because we are concerned about them. Thus, how can we be considered unreasonable? Aren't there plenty of people who support themselves very well without having to kill animals?

6.) Question: Cows help plow the fields and dogs loyally guard our homes. Thus, they have utility and should not be killed. However, pigs and lambs have no other uses. If we do not eat them, what should we do with them?

Answer: One abstains from meat and liberates life in order to cultivate compassion. It has nothing to do with whether the animal is useful to humans or not. If one abstains from eating a type of meat simply because the animal has utility, then such thoughts are selfish. Such selfishness exists because evil habits and defilements still cover up our Buddha-nature.

7.) Question: It is true that when animals such as chicken, sheep and cattle are about to be slaughtered, they will cry out and show fear. Thus, killing them would be cruel. However, no such distress is shown by small fish. Therefore, why should we abstain from them?

Answer: Even though animals and fish come in different sizes, their Buddha-nature is all the same. For instance, both the killing of old men and babies are considered murder. If you insist on thinking that certain animals feel no pain because they do not shed tears or scream, then imagine the reaction of a mute person being attacked. Would you hear screams?

8.) Question: It is indeed cruel to personally slaughter animals. However, if we only eat the meat that others have slaughtered, wouldn't that make us blameless?

Answer: Such logic is nothing more than self deception. If you think that you can escape blame by delegating the task of slaughtering to others, then shouldn't a wrongfully executed man blame only the executioner and not the magistrate? Plausible deniability can fool some, but you cannot fool your conscience.

9.) Question: Liberating life is virtuous, but what should we do if the liberated animals are captured again?

Answer: Let hunters and fishermen do as they please. No one should cease doing good just because others do evil. For instance, a dedicated doctor cannot guarantee that the patient he heals today will live to see tomorrow. Likewise, those bringing relief in a famine cannot be sure if they can successfully avert starvation. The world is full of uncertainty, why do people only have doubts regarding life liberation? Moreover, how could you be sure that all the animals that are liberated will be recaptured?

Lastly, the truth is that if we simply attempt to do good, our merits are already complete.

10.) Question: Virtue is simply a good heart. Thus, isn't it enough that we are good people? why must we also abstain from meat?

Answer: Such a statement makes no sense whatsoever. How can you be virtuous if you inflict unspeakable pain on other living beings? There is no malice greater than

the heart that tolerates slaughter. Mencius said: "Humanity is based on mercy and compassion." Thus, a virtuous man will not kill or slaughter. People who inflict torturous pain on animals cannot be truly benevolent. There is not one virtuous man or noble gentleman under Heaven that is partial to slaughter.

11.) Question: I am indifferent to this matter. I neither intentionally slaughter nor deliberately avoid doing so. I simply go with the flow.... is that wrong?

Answer: If you slaughter when it is convenient to do so and refrain at other times simply out of caprice or absent-minded indifference, you will not receive any merits. However, you will still incur karmic retribution for the living beings you do kill. For instance, if a bandit misfires a crossbow bolt while plundering someone's household, and if the stray bolt then hits you, will you consider him guiltless?

12.) Question: Animals are killed or boiled because of their past evil karma. Even if we refrain from slaughtering them, someone else surely will. Thus, what harm could possibly result from slaughtering?

Answer: Even though animals must undergo their own karmic retributions, we are in a different position — we can choose. If you slaughter and hunt because you feel that they deserve it, then you will sink to their level. You will be reborn as an animal to be slaughtered. Thus, as we currently possess human rebirth, we have the ability to change our karmic situation for the better through the way we act. Hence, why delay in adopting virtue and humaneness?

13.) Question: Animals are often killed because of the karmic debts they owe. Thus, why is it wrong for us to collect our due?

Answer: It is true that animals are killed as repayment for past karmic debts. However, there is a difference between simple karmic retribution and the retribution of maturing debt. The former is when an animal's past evil karmic seeds ripen in the form of random slaughter. The latter situation refers to when an animal is slaughtered by someone who had been killed by it in past lives.

In a typical banquet, the number of animals killed is countless. For instance, caviar contains numerous souls. As people are so indiscriminate in their eating habits, how can anyone be certain that every piece of meat they eat is their rightful due? Most likely, only a few out of the multitudes of animals you eat actually owe you. The rest

are now your karmic creditors!

14.) Question: If we kill animals that actually do owe us their lives, doesn't that cancel out the debt? Surely, there can be no further retribution?

Answer: Have you never seen a feud? How many rivals instantly become best friends after bouts of savage fighting? Bodhisattvas can clearly see how today's causes and conditions will play out in the future. Thus, Bodhisattvas never engage in vengeance.

Translator's Notes:

According to the Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra:

"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."

Thus, Upasaka An Shi's warning is very important. We should focus on cultivating good relationships with other living beings and exercise forbearance when slighted. This way, our stocks of merit will accrue boundlessly and any evil karma will dissolve.

15.) Question: The Buddha has said that anything that has life had once been our parents or relatives in previous rebirths. How is this true?

Answer: Sentient beings have been turning in the Samsara since time immemorial. Even if we take only one kalpa, the number of beings we would have been associated with during that time period would be countless. In fact, some of the animals currently in your household may be someone you knew in this life! For instance, I have personally witnessed the following case: When Liu Dao Yuan (the former magistrate of Pengxi County) was on his way home after retiring, he lodged at the home of the Qin family. That night, a tearful matron appeared in his dreams. She told him that she was the recently deceased wife of his host. Moreover, she revealed that King Yama had sentenced her to be reborn as a sheep for the offense of having beaten a servant girl to death. She also revealed that she was currently in the Qin family livestock pen and would be slaughtered the next day.

Liu Dao Yuan immediately rushed to inform his host of what he had just witnessed. However, it was already too late. The whole Qin family was grief stricken! Such situations happen often in this world, however, common people without spiritual attainments remain oblivious to such workings of karma.

Furthermore, in 1853, a native of Zhejiang named Li was known to have committed all kinds of evil. His evil karma eventually ripened and he turned into a pig while alive. His family members then rehomed him at a Buddhist temple. Magistrate (Sima) Xu Ying Ting personally witnessed this.

Translator's Notes:

According to the Buddha, evil karma created in this life can often materialize quickly (i.e. bloom of requital). This applies to Li's case. His evil karma was so strong that it manifested by turning him into a pig while he was still alive. This is not an isolated incident. In several editions of the Jade Record and other Sagely books, there are many recorded cases of evil people being transformed into animals while they were still alive. For instance, the Jade Record mentions a case where an evil man turned into an ox after being bedridden for years.

While most people would view these accounts with doubt, the truth is that both this world and the human body are purely the result of karma ; they are merely a mirror reflection of our karma. In Liao Fan's Four Lessons, a Zen master states that fate cannot bind those who cultivate good. This is because by diligently accumulating good deeds, one's original karma is altered. Once one's karma is altered, the outside must change as well. This is just like how a mirror must reflect whatever is in front of it. The universe, world and the human body are like the mirror. They reflect whatever karmic balance is in front of them.

So if a man does only evil, the mirror will be forced to reflect the surplus of evil in front of it. This usually results in a decline in the sinner's body and fortunes. Being transformed into an animal while alive is one way evil karma can manifest. This is because the animal realm is one step lower than the human realm. Hence, Li had committed so much evil that the karmic balance which gave him his human rebirth was alerted for the worse. He no longer had enough good karma to retain his status as a human. Therefore, his human body deformed until he became a pig.

16.) Question: What should we do if we find ourselves powerless to stop acts of fishing, trapping and slaughtering?

Answer: Anyone who finds themselves in such a situation should sincerely recite whatever mantra they are familiar with, or sincerely recite **Namo Amitabha**. They should repent the animals' sins on their behalf and dedicate the merits of the recitation to them. This way, the animals will naturally receive karmic benefits.

If you see someone fishing or trapping, then focus your attentions on that person. Do not entertain other thoughts. Single-mindedly recite **Namo Duo Bao Tathagata** (南無多寶如來) for a few dozen times. If you do so, the fish and animals will all be able to evade capture. This Buddha's name is very potent, so do not fail to do as instructed.

Translator's Notes:

In this answer, Upasaka An Shi reveals to us a little known but important mantra. Just like reciting Guanyin Bodhisattva will extricate us from imminent danger, sincerely reciting **Namo Duo Bao Tathagata** while focusing on a fisherman or trapper will allow fish and animals to escape capture.

17. Question: When we ask the gods to bless us with children, wealth, offices and long life, how can we not offer sacrifices as a show of respect?

Answer: Every deity adores life and abhors slaughter. Furthermore, how can we expect long life and good fortune if we take away the lives of animals? How can we expect healthy children if we kill the offspring of animals? Not only does killing offend Heaven, it also betrays our conscience. We must remember that we are also made of flesh. There is no benefit in offering meat. In fact, doing so will bring only great harm.

Translator's Notes:

In Lao Tzu's Treatise on Response and Retribution, it is stated that Heaven bestows rewards on the virtuous and punishes the wicked within three years. It also mentions that there are numerous spirits such as the Spirit of the Hearth, Spirits of Justice and the Spirits of the Body that shadow each individual. These spirits report an individual's merits and sins to Heaven on a regular basis. Thus, Heaven is completely impartial and does not partake in quid pro quo. Therefore, if we really wish for

Heaven or God to respond to our prayers, we should diligently do good deeds within our power. If we commit karmic offenses (i.e. animal sacrifice) thinking that it will earn us favor, that would be the same as shooting ourselves in the foot. Heaven is merciful and wishes to bestow us with all good things. However, we often reject their blessings by sinning and treading on Heaven's teachings of virtue. If we rectify our hearts and change our behavior to accord with the will of Heaven, we would receive everything we wish for.

18.) Question: There is no question that those who are vegan should make vegan offerings to deities and their ancestors. However, if those who normally eat meat were to make vegan offerings, wouldn't that be cheap and disrespectful?

Answer: The I Ching states: "A family that sacrifices a cow to honor their ancestors derive inferior merit compared to the family that regularly makes modest offerings." Moreover, the Zuo Zhuan states: "Even the wild plants next to the mountain streams or the algae can be offered to gods and spirits." Thus, do you think the gods and spirits who dwell in the skies will quibble over a few pieces of meat?

19.) Question: Will gods and deities who accept meat offerings be reborn in the evil realms?

Answer: Sentient beings are reborn as gods and deities because they have cultivated virtue in their past life. Even though they are all virtuous, some are more merciful than others. The more merciful gods will reject offerings of meat. However, the gods that still have habits of anger will accept meat offerings. The merciful gods have more wisdom than blessings ; the angry gods have more blessings than wisdom. Therefore, once the heavenly blessings of the merciful gods end, they will not be reborn in the evil realms. However, the gods that are given to anger will most likely be reborn in the lower realms. Everyone must understand that Heaven cherishes all living beings, not just human life.

20.) Question: It is wrong to slaughter animals for the purpose of making meat offerings to gods and deities. However, is it also wrong to slaughter animals to feed one's parents?

Answer: It is even worse! The Book of Rites clearly states that: "Filial sons and daughters offer all that which is good to their parents and retain only the inferior for themselves." Therefore, if we slaughter animals for the sake of offering meat to our

parents, we would be saddling them with undesirable karmic offenses. How could we do something so unfilial? If we must provide our parents with meat, we should offer only thrice clean meat (i.e. meat that did not come from an animal that one personally ordered slaughtered or heard and or seen slaughtered). Meat from an animal that died naturally is permitted as well. These are the only two exceptions.

21.) Question: For the sake of repaying our parent's kindness, we must make rich offerings to them after they pass away. However, if someone's deceased parents ate meat, and they offer vegan food, wouldn't that be against their parent's preferences?

Answer: If the spirits of our parents and ancestors actually depended on these offerings to live, they would all be starving. The official memorial days number only a few days out of a year. These rites are simply a sign of respect. However, if we insist on slaughtering animals on these occasions, we would only be adding to the negative karmic burdens of our beloved parents and ancestors. How could we do such a thing?

22.) Question: Surely the spirits of someone's ancestors will enjoy and receive the offerings made by their descendents? Why would they not?

Answer: The Medium Agama Sutra states: "If one's ancestors have been reborn as ghosts, they can eat offerings that are sincerely offered. If they are in the heavenly realms, they live in bliss and will not bother to come and eat it. If they are in the three evil realms, their acute suffering prevents them from eating it. If they have been reborn as humans, then they have new families and will certainly not show up."

Thus, the duty of a descendent is to sincerely make vegan offerings and refrain from transferring new karmic burdens by slaughtering animals. As long as they are vegan before the memorial ceremony and sincere during the ceremony, they have done their filial duty. People should not worry about whether the offerings will be actually consumed by their intended recipients or not.

Translator's Notes:

The best way to honor the spirits of our ancestors is through merit dedication. As Upasaka An Shi pointed out, direct food offerings may not actually benefit the intended recipients. On the other hand, the merit from good deeds can help anyone anywhere. Thus, we should simultaneously make offerings to a Buddha image (doing

so is just as meritorious as making offerings to a real Buddha) and dedicate the potent resulting merits to our ancestors or the spirits. A simple and sincere verbal or mental declaration of intent will allow the merit to be transferred successfully.

23.) Question: Emperor Wu of Liang used vegan food made to resemble animals for sacrificial offerings. Scholars have interpreted his refusal to sacrifice animals as the cause of the declining fortunes of the Liang dynasty. Thus, isn't this a clear sign that vegan offerings are a breach of etiquette?

Answer: The reason men have faults is because of their biases and partialities. If you could recognize your own biases and mistakes, you will be able to separate kindness from cruelty. Emperor Wu of Liang's killing of the Liu Gui (six noblemen) and his scheme to flood Shouyang City were his faults. However, his use of vegan offerings prevented the spirits from incurring evil karma and allowed animals to live in peace. Therefore, such a policy should certainly be counted among his merits.

The decline of the Liang dynasty has nothing to do with vegan offerings. If the decline was caused by vegan offerings, then why did the Chen dynasty and Sui dynasty (whose leaders offered animal sacrifices) end so quickly?

Moreover, Master Lian Chi said: "Confucius has said that even those who use mannequins as funeral sacrifices are still incurring an offense of cruelty that will cause their families to become extinct." Thus, is it not enough that the vegan food is made to resemble animals? Must you so cruelly demand real animals be slaughtered?

Furthermore, after Emperor Wu of Liang ascended the throne, he abstained from meat and alcohol. He took care of the people and kept wars to a minimum. Yearly harvests were also good. From the Jin dynasty to the Sui dynasty, no one could match Emperor Wu of Liang's era in prosperity. His virtues allowed him to rule for 49 years and live for 86 years. Moreover, eight of his descendants served as Prime Minister during the Tang dynasty.

Thus, these scholars who compose libel against him do so because they discriminate against his faith in the Buddhadharma. They are covering up his merits out of malice.

24.) Question: When we host banquets in honor of our kinsmen or offer hospitality to dear friends, only meat dishes can convey our sincerity and please our guests. Isn't it unreasonable to sacrifice sincere hospitality to save animals?

Answer: If your guests are virtuous, they will rejoice in your compassion and will certainly not feel disrespected. If your guests express displeasure over the lack of meat, then such guests are nothing more than petty gluttons. Why should anyone incur the heavy karma of killing simply to please petty gluttons?

Furthermore, when Song dynasty statesman Su Tungpo was feasting with his guests, he wrote a poem to Chen Ji Chang:

"I pity the clams in the basket, who desperately yearn for moisture. I pity the fish in the pot, who are on the verge of asphyxiation. When fish are gutted, they suffer immensely. How could I do such a thing? Thus, this is why I offered you exhortations on non-violence in the place of warm greetings when we first met! Chancellor Lu Huai detested banquets—in the pot was a steamed duck, and when the lid was lifted, everyone held back as they noticed the cruelty. However, whenever Minister Wang Wuzi ate, the cutting boards were drenched with blood. He even served piglets on cameo glass platters. Virtuous Lu lived modestly and where his cap did not cover, white hair flowed. The gods wept as Wuzi dined sumptuously on meat and fish. The gods pleaded: why do you not abstain from tainting your excellent virtues with these acts of gluttony and slaughter?..... Human life is truly as short as a guest's stay! Please do not forget what I am saying, archive it into the Chronicle of Poems."

Thus, if even eminent statesmen like Su Tungpo did not offer meat at his banquets, why should you feel that vegan foods are not good enough for hospitality?

25.) Question: The Sovereign Fuxi taught people to weave nets, he also taught people to farm and fish, are you implying that Fuxi was wrong?

Answer: This is a misconception. In the prehistoric era, birds and other animals often interfered with human settlements. Thus, Fuxi taught people to make nets so they could trap animals and release them away from their homes. He never told people to fish or hunt. To claim that the Sages would teach people to kill is as egregious as slandering the virtuous and passing off sinners as saints!

26.) Question: When Confucius practiced mercy, he only refrained from fishing with nets and shooting sleeping animals. He did not say we could not use fish hooks or shoot at animals that are awake. Thus, as you completely prohibit both hunting and fishing, are you saying the teachings of Confucius are no good?

Answer: You are missing the point. Confucius clearly wished for everyone to completely refrain from taking animal life. When he prohibited the use of nets, he meant to shame us for our avarice. When he prohibited the shooting of sleeping and resting animals, he was pointing out our cruelty. Humans often kill without restraint and give peace to no creature. As Sages teach by example, Confucius' diet consisted only of spring water and fresh vegetables. He never fished or shot at any animal during his life. In fact, he offered only vegetable offerings to his ancestors. If you think Sages would cruelly hook fish and shoot birds, you are too shallow to understand their profound teachings.

Translator's Notes:

Sages always teach by example. We should not forget this fact. For instance, if we wanted to know what Jesus' most important teachings were, his forbearance, simplicity, forgiveness and tolerance clearly articulates what he wishes for us to emulate.

27.) Question: An eminent man must first love his family and then the people ; finally, he must show kindness to animals. Thus, kindness must be shown first to kinsmen and last to animals. Therefore, liberating life and practicing veganism are obviously the least important virtues. Are they not?

Answer: When Mencius spoke of hierarchy and precedence, he was referring to courtesy and etiquette within the family structure. Mencius did not ever intend to limit our compassion. Furthermore, by your logic, an orphan with no family could never show kindness to the people or animals without breaking the rules of precedence. It is not possible that compassionate Mencius would make such restrictive and frivolous rules.

28.) Question: You are correct, we should all observe vegan attha-sila (fasting). However, did Confucius observe such precepts?

Answer: The sutras state: "When fasting, you must eat only one meal of pure food at

the proper time." They also say: "When observing such precepts, you must exercise the utmost care and prudence." The Book of Rites states: "When fasting and holding the precepts of abstinence, your heart should be pure ; when the fasting ends, do not discard your purity." The standards of these teachings are high. Thus, even though today's people are inferior in everyway when compared to Confucius (who was the epitome of these Sagely teachings), they foolishly feel that emulating Confucius involves slaughtering animals and eating meat.

29.) Question: Observing the strict precepts of vegan attha-sila is indeed virtuous. However, wouldn't fasting make us weak and thin?

Answer: Our soul is more important than the impure body of blood, feces and skin that we temporarily inhabit. When Heaven bestows karmic rewards or punishments, do you think they care more about your external appearance or the virtuousness of your heart?

30.) Question: As the five pungent plants (onions, garlic, shallots, leeks and chives) all grow from the soil, why do Buddhist sutras prohibit them?

Answer: The Shurangama Sutra gives five reasons for the prohibition:

- 1.) These five plants are pungent and noxious.
- 2.) These five plants will prevent cultivators from gaining Bodhi.
- 3.) Auspicious gods and devas despise the smell of these plants.
- 4.) When the five pungent plants are eaten cooked, they stir up one's lust. When they are eaten raw, they stir up one's wrath.
- 5.) Demons and ghosts will hover around and lick the lips of those who eat the five pungent plants.

Translators Notes

While it is best that we refrain completely from the five pungent plants, the Venerable Master Chin Kung has said that the use of minute quantities for flavoring purposes is still OK.

31.) Question: Some people say that even though they are not vegan and do not observe the fast, they are still better than those who have fasted but later broke the precepts. However, those who have fasted but could not hold the precepts say that the fact they have fasted makes them superior to those who have never observed the fast. Which one is correct?

Answer: Let's use the example of holding office: Does a man who has never held office hold more advantages than the magistrate who was dismissed from office?

Translator's Notes:

Even if a magistrate is dismissed from office, he still retains all the money he has earned during his time in office and his social connections. Thus, we should all try to observe the fast. Even if our record is checkered, we will still gain substantial merits. For instance, the sutras state that those who merely observe the eight precepts for one day and one night will be wealthy for six hundred thousand rebirths.

32.) Question: I wish to become vegan, but I cannot resist the temptation of meat. What should I do?

Answer: Once those with excellent roots of virtue make the vows of Great Compassion, they will never be able to tolerate eating the flesh of living beings. However, if you are not this advanced, you should meditate on the five impurities:

- 1) The bodies of animals are dirty, hairy, impure and have odors.
- 2) Animals and livestock are often fed putrid food waste.
- 3) The places that livestock and animals live in are filthy.
- 4) The intestines and bladders of animals are full of fluids, feces and urine.
- 5.) The flesh of animals decay as soon as they die.

If you contemplate thus everyday, you will soon be able to become vegan.

33.) Question: The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas swiftly respond to the suffering of sentient beings. Emperor Wu of Liang was a devout Buddhist, yet he starved to death. Why wasn't he saved?

Answer: Emperor Wu of Liang did not starve to death. According to historical records, even when Hou Jing took the palace, he was overawed by the regal countenance of Emperor Liang and thus deferred to him. Furthermore, the records also show that Wang Lun later delivered a large supply of chicken feed for the egg-laying hens. Afterwards, Emperor Liang felt a bitter taste in his mouth and asked for honey (which was a luxury sweetener not readily available). The 86 year old emperor then died of old age a few moments later.

Thus, the fact that he only wanted honey to relieve the bitter taste in his mouth showed that he was not starving. Furthermore, the fact that Wang Lun had just delivered supplies indicated that the larders were well stocked with essentials.

Therefore, faithlessness in the Buddha is the reason that so many learned scholars gloss over important details and spread their own false conclusions. Their habits of doubt and partiality towards slaughter clouds their judgment.

TRANSLATORS COMMENTARY:

Unbeknownst to many, hunting, fishing and animal slaughter cause severe karmic retributions in this world. For instance, Upasaka An Shi explains in his foreword that the wars, violence and chaos that plague this world are all caused by the evil karma created by the taking of animal life.

Hence, the desire to eat meat is the cause of misery. In fact, today, hundreds of billions of animals are slaughtered each year just to satisfy the desires of a few billion humans. No wonder the Buddha said in the Infinite Life Sutra that those who cultivate virtue in this world for ten days can reap the same amount of merits that would take those in other worlds a whole millennium to amass.

Furthermore, Venerable Master Hsuan Hua also concurs with Upasaka An Shi's answer for Question 15 in his commentary on the Shurangama Sutra:

During the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang, the Buddhadharma flourished. Whenever there was a wedding reception Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. On children's birthdays, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. In short, no matter what the occasion, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras and give their blessing. They would give a short speech about the auspiciousness of the event - what a lucky occasion it was. At that time there was a wealthy man who was celebrating the marriage of his son. He invited Ch'an Master Chih Kung to recite Sutras and give the blessing. When Ch'an Master Chih Kung arrived and looked around, he said:

***How strange! How bizarre!
The grandson marries the grandmother.
The daughter eats the mother's flesh.
The drum the son beats is stretched
with the father's skin.
Pigs and sheep are on the seat.
The six close kin cook in the brazier.
People gather to celebrate.
I see all this as a form of suffering.***

Why was the grandson marrying his grandmother? It was because when the grandson was two years old, his grandmother died. As she was dying, she grabbed her grandson's hand and said, "I'm at the point where I can let go of everyone else, but I can't forget about my grandson. Who will take care of him in the future?" And she died clutching her grandson's hand.

After her death she went before King Yama and he said, "Oh, you love your grandson so much? Fine. Go back and be your grandson's wife." So she was reborn as a woman and when she came of age, her grandson chose her as his wife. How did Ch'an Master Chih Kung know this? Because he had the ability to know others' thoughts and the ability to perceive past lives - he had the Buddha Eye.

When he looked in front of the house he said, "The daughter eats the mother's flesh," because he saw a little girl chewing on a chunk of pork. Her mother had died and been reborn as a pig. The pig had been slaughtered and cooked, and she was actually eating the flesh of her own mother!

When he inspected the musicians in the band by the entrance way, he said, "The drum the son beats is stretched with the father's skin." The drummer was hitting a drum stretched with deer-hide. His father had died and been reborn as a deer. The deer had been slaughtered and its hide tanned and the drummer was actually beating his own father!

Then Ch'an Master Chih Kung noticed that "Pigs and sheep are on the seat." He saw pigs and sheep sitting like guests on the k'ang - the high brick beds in the house. They were people now, but in their former lives they had been pigs and sheep. In their former lives they themselves had been eaten, so now they were reborn as people who in turn ate pigs and sheep to even up the debt.

When the Ch'an Master took a look at the cooking pots' he exclaimed, "Six close kin cook in the brazier." The six kinds of close kin refer to relatives on the father's side and the mother's

side, kin of the brother and sisters, and so forth. They had been close relatives of these people but now had been reborn as pigs and sheep, had been slaughtered, and were being cooked in the brazier.

Ch'an Master Chih Kung summarized, "People gather to celebrate." Everyone who came was saying, "Congratulations!" and "Best Wishes!" But the Master notes, "I see all this as a form of suffering." What I see is actually suffering.

Master Hsuan Hua and Upasaka An Shi both makes it clear that people are reborn together as family members due to interconnected karmic affinities, debts and credits that have accrued since time immemorial. Thus, it is very likely for deceased parents to be reborn as livestock that will be eaten by their still living children. So imagine that! How many people have, like the Qin family, unwittingly killed and eaten their loved ones while still grieving over their losses?

Furthermore, the Buddha has said that those who refrain from taking animal life will be long lived, healthy, safe and fortunate due to the potent positive karma created. The two accounts below are clear verifications of the Buddha's words. These true historical accounts are from an edition of the Jade Record that was written by a Chinese cultivator who met a Buddhist deity during meditation.

The Merciful Scholar:

During the Song dynasty, there was a young scholar who had tried and failed several times to pass the imperial examinations. Four years after his first failed attempt, he again travelled to the imperial capital to take part in the latest round of examinations.

He lodged himself in an inn and proceeded to study through the night in preparation for the upcoming exam. However, he soon became fatigued and dozed off. As he was about to slip into deep sleep.....a vision of a distressed and bloodied white rabbit suddenly appeared! The rabbit pleaded with him to free it along with several other small animals held in the inn cellar.

The scholar immediately awakened and was initially doubtful at what he had just seen. Nevertheless, curiosity prompted him to silently sneak into the cellar. Surprisingly—there was indeed several animals locked in a cage. What he saw

reflected his vision perfectly.

He soon realized that these trapped pheasants and small game were to be later served as main courses. Feeling ashamed over the fact that he too ate game, he hastily helped the animals to flee by opening the cage and cellar window. However, the injured white rabbit that had appealed to him for help remained traumatized and huddled in the corner. Thus, the scholar silently packed his bags in the middle of the night and personally carried the rabbit with him on his way out.

Eventually, the scholar stopped to rest under an arbor. Suddenly—out of the blue—a celestial devi appeared before him. She was fair beyond imagination and possessed a radiant golden complexion. As soon as she stretched her elegant hands towards the scholar, the rabbit quickly jumped into her arms. The devi then revealed that the rabbit he saved belonged to her. It had been violently captured while patrolling the mortal world. As the rabbit reassumed its celestial form, the injuries it had sustained miraculously disappeared. She explained that even though he was not a man of high wisdom, his kind and merciful heart had generated enough merits to gain high office. She reminded him to be kind towards the citizenry and to diligently protect living beings for the rest of his life. Having said that, the devi instantly disappeared. The young scholar was left in awe at the magnificent sight he had just witnessed.

The scholar proceeded to lodge himself at another inn and took the imperial exams the next day. Even though he did not achieve the prestigious academic honors he had sought after, he was still awarded a magistracy. Furthermore, he was quickly and continuously promoted by his superiors. Reflecting on this, he finally understood the power of good deeds and henceforth liberated life everyday. In addition to buying captive animals slated for slaughter and setting them free, he also became vegan and promoted veganism.

Years soon passed and the young scholar was now 54 years old. Furthermore, he had also reached the exalted post of Chancellor of State. Despite his unceasing efforts to liberate life and the fact that he had convinced many to stop eating meat, he still felt that his impact was limited. The courtiers, aristocrats and members of the imperial family all scoffed at his scruples and continued to feast sumptuously on various meats such as lamb, bear paws and beef. They did not feel even a hair's breadth worth of shame at their cruelty and excess.

The scholar felt sorrow over the never ending slaughter and thus tendered his retirement. After returning to his hometown, he spent his remaining years using his substantial pension to adopt stray dogs and suffering animals.

When he turned 76, he saw the white rabbit that he had saved perched gracefully on his window sill. The scholar (who was on his deathbed) understood that his lifespan was up. Regretting that he could not turn the tide against meat eating, he expressed his apologies. However, the white rabbit quickly led him to his front gate where to his amazement, all the souls of the countless animals he had saved over the years were crowded around his residence. The rabbit then said: "As your stocks of merit are full to the point of overflowing, the Heavenly Lord Lao Tzu wishes to bestow upon you a place among the gods. Otherwise, you could have your lifespan extended by 30 years. Your choice." The scholar replied that 30 years was too short and expressed his wish to rise to the side of the Heavenly Lord and assist him in doing good. Hence, he closed his eyes and ascended towards his celestial villa in the company of the white rabbit he had saved so many years before.

Guanyin Bodhisattva's Visit to a Butcher:

In 1908, there lived in Shanxi province a butcher named Chang. His parents (who were also butchers) had already passed away, leaving him alone in the world with his sickly younger sister. Everyday, he slaughtered a pig and sold the meat for a living.

Ironically, when Chang was young, he had detested the cruelty involved in slaughtering pigs. However, as he was the only heir to the family butchery, his parents forced him to learn the trade. By the time he was 25, he was already known in his village as the guillotine that all pigs fear. In fact, the total number of pigs he had slaughtered was so numerous that if all the skulls of the pigs he had killed were lined up in a straight line, it would span several miles.

One day, a old woman visited the village and approached Chang's butchery. She said to him, " I will show you the way to a future fortune if you could give me two porkers free of charge." Chang thought that the old woman was mentally ill and thus ignored her. However, the old woman responded to this snub by recounting in detail his life, history and family situation. She also warned him

that this was his last chance to extricate himself from his evil karma.

Startled by the fact that this stranger knew everything about him, Chang immediately suspected that she was a deity and proceeded to comply with her request for two porkers. She left right after taking possession of the two porkers, leaving Chang somewhat bewildered. Nevertheless, he was happy to have not offended a potential deity. However, before she disappeared from sight, she turned back towards Chang and shouted —"I'll be back tomorrow!"

The next day, she came back to Chang's butchery and requested that he give her four pigs. Chang immediately became irate and accused her of being a greedy fraud. However, she paid no heed to his anger and simply repeated her request for four pigs. Chang then demanded to know what happened to the two porkers he gave her the day before. She replied that she had released them.

Incensed, Chang immediately launched into an angry tirade. However, the old woman remained completely calm and simply asked, "Do you understand why I asked for those two porkers?"

Chang ignored the question and continued his tirade. Suddenly and without warning, the old lady ascended into the air and transformed into Guanyin Bodhisattva! Faced with such a majestic and august sight—Chang promptly fell to his knees in reverence despite not being a Buddhist.

The Bodhisattva did not wait for Chang to compose himself, but immediately showed him a vision which explained that the two porkers were actually his parents. They had been reborn as pigs to atone for their sins. Hence, he was just a few moments away from committing patricide and matricide had the Bodhisattva not intervened. Feeling immense shock and guilt, Chang begged the Bodhisattva to show him the way forward.

The Bodhisattva said, " Your lifespan has been reduced considerably because of your offenses. Thus, if you wish to save yourself , you must henceforth cease all acts of killing. Furthermore, you must protect the pigs currently in your pigsty for the rest of their natural lives. Afterwards, you must liberate 10,000,000 pigs in order to fully rectify your karmic situation. The first pig to die in your pigsty will show you the way."

As soon as these words were spoken, the Bodhisattva vanished into thin air. It was not difficult for Chang to keep the pigs currently in his pigsty, but he was doubtful that he could ever liberate 10,000,000 pigs. Nevertheless, after thinking of the Bodhisattva's assurances, he diligently proceeded to do as instructed. From that moment on, he treated his pigs like family. Eventually, word spread that he had renounced his career as a butcher. However, he never told anyone about his encounter with Guanyin Bodhisattva. Instead, he simply exhorted people to liberate life and refrain from slaughtering animals.

After a few years had passed, one of the pigs fell ill and was on the verge of death. As he was comforting the dying pig, it suddenly started to repeatedly oink towards a spot on the ground. A curious Chang immediately started to dig.... and to his surprise—crude oil began to seep out! A short while later, surveyors concluded that his pigsty was located above a oil reserve. He promptly sold his property and mineral rights for tens of thousands of silver dragons. He used this capital to start a business that soon generated for him a fortune. Everyday, he sent men into the market to purchase live pigs, thereafter depositing these pigs into Buddhist animal sanctuaries. After doing so for 50 years, he finally managed to save 10,000,000 pigs.

Chang lived to the ripe old age of 78. When he died, he left behind a wealthy family. Also, due to the karma created by his good deeds, he was able to avoid the wars of that period—safely retreating to Taiwan after the Communist takeover.

Commentary:

By simply saving the lives of several small animals, the scholar was able to amass enough merits to gain a lifetime of high offices. Furthermore, his remuneration and pension likely amounted to a fortune of tens of thousands of silver taels. In comparison, a small family could live for a year on just a few taels of silver during that time. He did not originally have such good fortune pending, but that one act of opening the cage yielded these rewards.

Moreover, due to his further efforts to promote veganism and liberate life, he was able to ascend to a blissful heavenly rebirth at the time of death. However, he was also offered a lifespan extension of thirty years. This is because those who liberate life will naturally obtain a long lifespan.

The same goes for the butcher. By simply renouncing his butcher's knife and protecting his remaining sounder of pigs for a few years, he managed to create such a large stock of good fortune that oil manifested below his land. Furthermore, his further efforts to liberate life gave him unparalleled prosperity and health. In fact, his originally meager lifespan was extended by over half a century! All this does not include the additional benefit of having the entirety of his prior evil karma eradicated. Thus, Chang went from a man on the verge of rebirth in the hells to a long lived and wealthy merchant.

Chang's case is an example of the Buddhist maxim: The butcher who drops his knife can become a saintly Bodhisattva on the spot. Moreover, in the latest edition of the Jade Record, illustrated by Jiang Yi Zi (江逸子) through psychography, the hellish rebirth that would have awaited Chang had he not changed is illustrated below:



The deity that guided Jiang's hand when he drew these pictures is actually the demigod Magistrate Cheng Huang. He holds the rank of Praetor in the administration of the Four Heavenly Kings and his duty is to promote the laws of karma. Thus, these pictures provide us with an accurate idea of the karmic retributions that awaits those who slaughter animals.

Furthermore, in a set of short ancient historical accounts verified by Master Yin Guang, two of them reveal the supreme merits that result from not eating beef. While

the killing of any animal for its meat is a severe offense, the gravest is the killing of cows.

According to the first of the two accounts: A member of a travelling theater troupe once met the wandering ghost of his deceased neighbor (who had died abroad). The ghost asked for permission to share the ferry he had hired, so that he (the ghost) may return home to take up abode in his ancestral shrine. The actor agreed. Eventually, the actor asked the ghost, "What does King Yama consider to be the gravest karmic offense?" The ghost replied, "Eating beef is the most serious sin—those who eat beef are devoid of fortune and bereft of divine protection—on the other hand, those who abstain from it will be blessed by the gods and accrue excellent stocks of merit!"

Hearing this, the actor immediately vowed that he would never eat beef again. However, the ghost immediately burst into tears and exclaimed: "I can no longer return home! The auspicious spirits of good karma who now protect you will not allow a sinful being like me to accompany you." Dejected, the ghost climbed overboard and wandered away. Overawed by this revelation, the actor quickly rushed back to his village and convinced everyone to refrain from eating beef.

Unfortunately in this account, the actor did not know that he could dedicate his merits to the ghost. If he had done so, the ghost would have been immediately transformed into a radiant deva possessing a celestial palace (see the *Petavatthu* for more info). Likewise, according to the second account: A minor local official of Suzhou province once circulated letters that encouraged people to abstain from beef. He did so after the spirit of a deceased colleague appealed to him to make merits on his behalf. As a result of this deed, the deceased colleague became a deva and the local official's lifespan was extended by six twelve year periods! Furthermore, his stocks of merit were filled to the brim.

In Lao Tzu's *Treatise on Response and Retribution*, it is stated that grave sins result in one's lifespan being shortened by a period of twelve years and vice versa. Thus, the local official increased his lifespan by a whopping seventy two years by simply encouraging the local community to refrain from eating beef. This increase in lifespan was also accompanied by wealth, happiness, offices and future heavenly rebirth.

Therefore, how much more will be our reward if we abstain from all types of meat and diligently promote veganism?

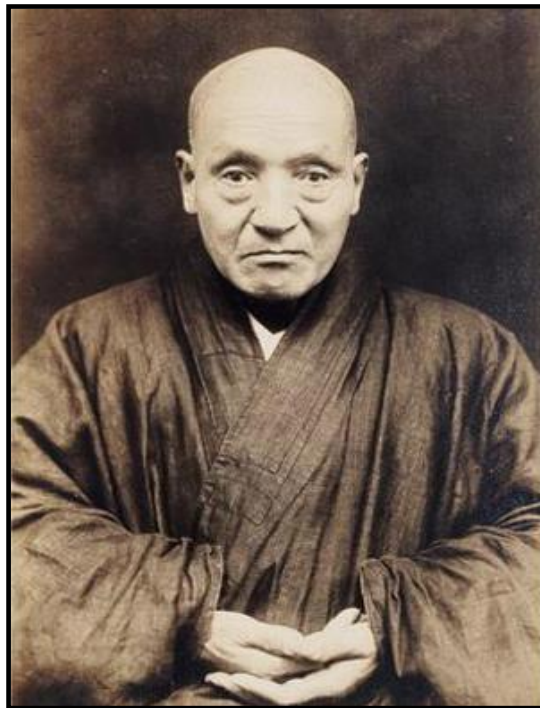
It should be very clear by now that hunting, fishing, meat eating or engaging in the meat packing business will lead to heavy karmic debts. Thus, If we wish to be long lived and happy—and if we want to avoid atrocities and hellish karmic retributions—then we should diligently liberate life and encourage others to do the same. Furthermore, we should eat a meat free diet and abstain from hunting, fishing or working in the meat packing industry. If we sell food and provide catering services for a living, we should not sell meat products or dishes containing meats. The good karma generated from such abstinence will ensure happiness in this life and heavenly bliss in the next. If we dedicate these merits towards Buddahood in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, we will surely realize our aspiration!

Recommended Charity: Tainan Avalokitesvara Homeland Buddhist Association

Website: <http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Donation.php>
Sanctuary gallery: http://www.avalokitesvara.tw/Pet1_pic.php
Email: a0981552011@gmail.com
Facebook: <https://zh-tw.facebook.com/avalokitesvara2013>

This charity is registered with the government of Taiwan. Their mission is to save cattle, pigs, rabbits, poultry, goats, fish and the like from slaughter by purchasing them, and moving them to their sprawling animal sanctuary in Tainan county.

PATRIARCH YIN GUANG'S EXHORTATION



Patriarch Yin Guang (1861-1940)

"Whether we are laymen or among the robed and ordained, we must respect our superiors and show kindness to our subordinates. We must bear what others cannot bear and practice what others are too weak to cultivate. We must shoulder other's burdens and help everyone succeed in their cultivation."

"During solitary moments, we must self reflect and repent. However, we should never prattle about the mistakes or scandals of others."

"We must be mindful of Amita Buddha from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn. It makes no difference whether we are undertaking great feats or engaged in mundane daily chores, we must unceasingly recite the Buddha's name."

"When we are reciting—whether loudly, quietly or silently—we must refrain from entertaining false and wandering thoughts. There should not be a single thought which is not the Buddha's name in our minds. If false and wandering thoughts arise, dispel them immediately."

"Always feel remorse and be penitent. Even if we are skilled in cultivation, we must be humble and regard our own abilities as inferior. Never should we indulge in superbia."

"Instead of prying into the affairs or feuds of others, we should focus on ordering our own house. Furthermore, we should see only the merits of others, and not their faults or evils."

"For humility's sake, we must consider everyone else to be exalted Bodhisattvas—but ourselves as mere mortals."

"Those who observe these instructions will definitely achieve rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss."

**BUDDHISM IS NONE OTHER THAN CULTIVATING VIRTUE,
DISCARDING VICES AND PURIFYING THE MIND.**

NAMO AMITABHA!

NAMO AMITABHA!

NAMO AMITABHA!

MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA'S TREATISE ON PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH MINDFULNESS OF AMITAYUS

As Mahasthamaprapta, a prince of Dharma, arose from his seat, the 52 Bodhisattvas who formed his august retinue immediately followed suit. He and his retinue proceeded to reverently prostrate before the Buddha. His Serene Highness then spoke the following to the assembly:

"In a time before time immemorial, a Buddha titled Infinite Light appeared in this world. He was the first of twelve Buddhas who emerged in the that kalpa. The last one was a Buddha whose glorious light outshined the majestic brightness of both the Sun and the Moon. Thus, he was known as the Brightness Upon the Sun and the Moon Buddha."

"That Buddha personally taught me the Mindfulness of Amitayus Samadhi. For example, if a father who adores his son should have a son who does not requite, then the son's back will always be turned on his father. However, if both father and son were to yearn for each other, and if they unceasingly cherish thoughts of each other, then not even death could separate them. They will be together for life after life like a shadow following the form. The Buddhas of the ten quarters are like the father. They constantly show tender concern towards sentient beings who rarely requite. If those sentient beings could instead single-mindedly hold the Buddha's name, they will surely meet the Buddha. The Buddha's hands are always extended, but it is up to you to grasp it."

"Furthermore, if a man were to habitually burn scented incense, his person will naturally exude fragrant aromas. Likewise, a man who is mindful of the Buddha's name will be adorned with the Buddha's infinite light and merit. Hence, it was through such mindfulness that I gained insight into the fact that all dharmas neither arise nor cease. Today in this world, I tirelessly exhort all to faithfully practice the Dharma-door of Pure Land. There is no better way to attain Perfect Enlightenment and the state of no outflows than by pure and unceasing mindfulness of Amitayus. Such Samadhi is the foremost."

Commentary:

As we live in the Dharma-ending age, the surest way for us to attain Bodhi is via single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. By doing so, we can attain rebirth and enlightenment in Amita Buddha's Pureland. According to the first of Amita Buddha's 48 Vows:

Sutra Vows 1-2 : The Vows of No Evil and Suffering

"If I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my Buddha-land will be adorned with infinite and inconceivable merits. There shall be no hell beings, emaciated ghouls, wild beasts, pests and pestilences in my land. Sentient beings arriving to dwell in my land, even from the hells or evil paths, will all share my merits and become Bodhisattvas at once. They shall never again fall back into the states of suffering. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Thus, once we are reborn in Pureland, we become Bodhisattvas immediately.

This treatise, which is the last paragraph of Chapter 5 of the Shurangama Sutra, is one of the five principle texts of Pureland Buddhism. It was added to the original four by Master Yin Guang during the early 20th century. In fact, it was later determined after Master Yin Guang's passing that he was actually Mahasthamaprapta manifesting in human form! Therefore, this treatise represents the Buddha's timely gift of Dharma to us all. It is also the most important part of the Shurangama Sutra.

In this treatise, Mahasthamaprapta concisely explains the mechanics behind single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha's name. The example of the father and the son is a masterful choice of words as it explains the level of devotion required in a way that most people can relate to. If we (i.e. the son) can yearn for the Buddha (i.e. the father) as strongly as a father loves his child, we will certainly achieve single-mindedness. Once single-mindedness is achieved, the terms of the treatise are fulfilled and one immediately becomes a Bodhisattva of Pureland.

TWO MODERN ACCOUNTS OF PURELAND REBIRTH: THE PIOUS CHILD AND HE WHO CONQUERED HIS KARMIC OBSTACLES

First account written by Guo Xuan Lee and translated into English by Huali Yuan.

Second account taken from the 1986 issue of the Vajra Bodhi Sea.

My parents lived in Australia, and they did not believe in the Buddhadharma. When I first began to study Buddhadharma, I also exhorted my family to study. My mother and younger sister followed me to become vegetarians and commenced reciting the Buddha's name. However, my father still insisted that we were being superstitious and even obstructed my practice. One day, my parents and sister had an accident in the car they were driving. The accident was serious. The car was almost entirely wrecked, and my father went into a coma and bled profusely. My mother and sister remained safe and sound. After this experience, their faith grew in the Buddhadharma. My father was sick in bed and could not walk, but he firmly believed that he would fully recover and be able to walk again. Therefore, he asked many good doctors to treat him. But all efforts were in vain; his physical health did not improve. He lost his temper most of the time because he wasn't getting better, which tormented my mother, so I went back to Australia to visit them.

I arrived home and explained to my father the truth of the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death, as well as other aspects of Buddhadharma. I told him, "You have already gone through the suffering of birth and old age. Now you are undergoing the suffering of sickness, and the last will be the suffering of death." I explained the Buddhadharma to him every day, and he gained a bit of faith. He told me that one day when he was lying in bed, he saw his room burst into a huge fire, but strangely enough, some fish were amid the fire. He hurriedly called my mother in but when she came, she saw nothing. My father asked me what it meant, so I told him my personal view: "Our physical body is like the house we are living in. Now your house is on fire, which means that your body is in the process of breaking down. As for the fish, have you ever seen a fish close its eyes? Fish always keep their eyes open, which means that you will wake up soon. So don't be attached and confused any more. You are blessed, for

the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have shown you these things to make you wake up now! Your physical condition is deteriorating quickly. Do not cling to it any longer.” From then on, my father changed to a vegetarian diet and began to recite the Buddha’s name.

Half a year before my father's rebirth, my elder sister visited him once. She is a filial daughter with a kind heart, but being a Catholic, she believes animals are created to be eaten by humans and that all that is important is for a person to have a good heart. When she heard that our father was sick, weak, and on a vegetarian diet, she was worried that he would not get enough nutrition. She explained her concern to Father and asked him if she could cook meat for him. He took her advice at once and was happy that he could eat meat again. So one thing led to another, then he could not stop and later he even desired to eat pig's feet every day. My mother called me and asked me to talk to him. Over the phone I just said a few words to him, “Dad, if you eat other beings’ feet now, in the future other beings will eat your feet.”

One week later, my mother called again and told me that my father had returned to a vegetarian diet.

Two months before his rebirth, he could not fall asleep at night. In his sleep it sounded as if he were talking to someone—being angry and yelling. Thus, I went back to Australia again to visit him. I asked him why he could not sleep. He said that some beings came to bother him every night, and none of them had feet. I realized at once that they were his enemies and beings in whom he was indebted. I told him, “It is because you ate others’ feet in the past. They are all now coming back to you.” Then I asked him, “How did you treat them?”

He said, “I am not afraid of them. I never did a single evil thing or harmed a single person in my life; I do not need be afraid of them. If they come, I will fight with them!” I advised him to not behave like that, because those ghost beings are in great suffering, without blessings, and they have no opportunities of encountering the Buddhadharma. “That is why you should be compassionate toward them. If they come again tonight, you should apologize to them and tell them that because you did not understand principle, you harmed them, and now you are seeking forgiveness from them. Also you can tell them to recite the Buddha’s name, so that they can seek rebirth in the Pure Land and escape the Samsara. You yourself also have to recite the Buddha’s name on their behalf. Recite

‘Amitabha Buddha’.” The next morning, I asked Father whether they came or not and how it was. He said they did come and he addressed them as I taught. Then he recited the Buddha’s name on their behalf, and they did not disturb him any longer. They stood there listening to the Buddha’s name and after that, they left.

A week before my father's rebirth, one day it appeared that he was dying, so my mother and younger sister started to recite the Buddha’s name. After a whole day, my father was still alive. Suddenly, my sister smelled fragrant incense, which lasted for about five minutes. She knew that she needed to offer incense. She asked mother to bring a censer for the incense, while wishing the Buddha would come to welcome Father and his enemies into the Pure Land. They made the incense offering and continued reciting the Buddha’s name. Then my sister heard other voices around them, many melodic voices resounding in the air, reciting the Buddha's name. My sister said that upon hearing these wonderful sounds, she felt very pure and clear in her heart. One week later, my father passed away. His mind was quite clear when he was dying, and he had already put down everything -- his wife, children, and house. His only wish was to follow the Buddha, and he was ready. He passed away peacefully. His face was ruddy and pleasant, and even had a smile on it. His body was also very soft. Some people who came to assist reciting the Buddha’s name smelled fragrant incense.

Forty-nine days after my father's rebirth, one day my son Mingguang was asleep, and he dreamed that someone nudged his elbow. When he opened his eyes, he saw his grandfather. Mingguang said that his grandfather did not look the way he looked before. He now had the appearance of a Bhikshu, with hair already shaven, a very fresh and smooth face without any wrinkles, wearing a bright orange sash, smiling happily. Mingguang asked him, “Grandpa, why are you here?” His grandpa answered, smiling, "I came to tell you that I have followed Amitabha Buddha and have been reborn in the Pure Land. Mingguang, you should vigorously recite Buddha’s name and follow Amitabha Buddha!

In 1923 an exceptionally bright child was born to the Yen family, whom they named Yen Bau Yeh. The father, Yen Syau Nyan, a native of Beijing, was an erudite lawyer, who liked to study the Buddhadharma and to cultivate. The mother, from the Jang family, was well versed in the classics and was also a very good person. When the child was born, he showed many signs of intelligence. When he was only a few months old, he would call out, "father." On occasions when the Mr. Yen had to go away on business trips, the child would be aware of it and ask when his father would return, and say that he would miss him. When he was two years old, his mother began to teach him to read and write Jungwen. After showing him a character only once, he was able to clearly remember it. Soon he could remember several hundred characters. His mother used flash-cards to test him, and he would never make even a single mistake. After being tested he would always put the cards with the characters for "mother" and "father" on top of the stack. His parents asked him why he did that, and he said it was because one must be respectful. One time he was given some cookies to eat that were imprinted with characters. One of the characters happened to be his mother's maiden name, and so he refused to eat it.

His father often told him about reciting the Buddha's name and taught him how to recite and about Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land. The boy bowed to the Buddha and recited the Buddha's name without cease. He would recite the names of the Three Sages of the West, a mantra of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, and also the name of Shakyamuni Buddha. He wasn't sloppy about it at all. He was very sincere and would recite aloud. People often saw him carrying recitation beads while reciting. It was the family custom to go to their Buddhahall and recite the Buddha's name after their meal. If for some reason the family didn't recite, the child would get them all to come to the hall and recite.

His parents taught him not to kill animals. They said that animals like to live just as much as people do. Both parents were strict vegetarians. He learned at an early age to respect other living beings by not harming insects or smaller animals.

When given food, he would ask if killing was involved in obtaining the food. He wouldn't eat until he was sure it was pure vegetarian food. He was very happy whenever he saw his parents give to beggars. He would feel right at home in the temples. When the monks recited a sutra, he would listen with great joy. After hearing it, he would not want to leave.

He had a little brother who died very young, and when people asked him where his brother had gone, he would always say, "To the Land of Ultimate Bliss." Once he said, "I'm going to go to the Western Land." His grandfather scolded him, but the child still said he was going soon. One day he was a little bit sick and vomited. He did not say anything except, "I'm going to go; I'm going to go."

His family surrounded him and recited the Buddha's name. The next day he was a bit weaker. People brought a Buddha image to his bedside, and he was very happy. Then he lay back down and his father asked him, "Are you reciting the Buddha's name?"

He answered, "Yes " and then he died. His body grew cold, but the top of his head remained warm. The room was filled with a rare fragrance.

After witnessing this in his own family, the father's faith in the Buddhisthadharma increased. He took up the cultivation of exclusively reciting the Buddha's name.

蓮花廚房 The Lotus Kitchen

黑椒素香三明治 Vegetarian Steak

■ Bert Tan

Materials 材料			
Bean Curd Pouch	豆腐包片	1 bag	一袋
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Green onion	綠蔥	1 piece	一枝
Hot water	熱水	1 cup	一杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	1 cup	一杯
Soy sauce	醬油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Star Anise	茴香	2 little pieces	二小顆
Black Mushroom Extract	素食調味粉	3 tea spoons	三茶匙
Sugar	糖	4 tea spoon	四茶匙
Black pepper	黑胡椒	a little	少許
Toaster bread	吐司麵包	2 pieces	兩片
Strawberry	草莓	2, 3 pieces	兩、三顆



Preparation: Rinse four bean curd pieces (1 bag has 8) and dry; chop green onion into small slices.

Seasoning base: Mix soy sauce, black mushroom extract, sugar, star anise, and hot water in a saucer.

Cook: Heat cooking oil in the frying pan; fry the bean curd pouch pieces until wrinkles develop take it out and drain the oil. Put about 2 table spoons of hot oil in the frying pan, throwing in green onion slices. Pour in the prepared seasoning base when the onion flavor develops in the frying pan; turn the burner immediately down to medium heat. Put in the bean curd pouch pieces, sprinkle black pepper on it, let it simmer for about 3 minutes; flip side and sprinkle black pepper again, continue to simmer it until the liquid is almost dry. Serve in the plate with toaster bread, and strawberry, decorated with cilantro.

香辣豆腐 Hot & Spicy Tofu

Materials 材料			
Soft Tofu	嫩豆腐	1 box	一盒
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Green onion	綠蔥	1 piece	一枝
Starch	芡粉	½ tea spoon	½ 茶匙
Hot water	熱水	1/3 cup	三分之一杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Soy sauce	醬油	1 - 1½ table spoons	1 - 1½ 湯匙
Chilly sauce	辣椒醬	1 table spoon	一茶匙
Vegetarian seasoning	素食調味粉	1½ tea spoons	1½ 茶匙
Sugar	糖	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Seasoned black bean	豆豉	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Red pepper seed	花椒粒	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Black pepper	黑胡椒	a little	少許



Preparation: Chop the tofu into small cubes (¾ in) and the green onion into small pieces.

Seasoning base: Mix chilly sauce, soy sauce, vegetarian seasoning, and sugar in a saucer.

Cook: Heat the cooking oil in frying pan; add in the chopped green onion pieces, followed by the seasoned black beans, and the red pepper seeds; stir it. Add tofu cubes and stir lightly, then add 1/3 cup of water, turn the heat to medium. Add the seasoning base and cover the frying pan; stew it for 5-7 minutes. Apply light starch and turn the burner off. At this time, apply black pepper and cilantro. Place it in a plate and serve hot.

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香味豆干絲 Delicious Soy Bean Thread

Materials 材料			
Soy bean thread	豆干絲	2 box	二包
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Green onion	綠蔥	1 piece	一枝
Pepper corn	花椒	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Shallot	紅蔥	2-3 pieces	二、三粒
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Soy sauce paste	醬油膏	1-2 table spoons	1-2 湯匙
Black mushroom extract	素食調味粉	2 tea spoons	2 茶匙
Sugar	糖	½ tea spoon	½ 茶匙
Sesame Oil	麻油	a little	少許
White pepper	白胡椒	a little	少許
Baking soda	蘇打粉	2 flat tea spoons	2 茶匙



Preparation: (1) Rinse soy bean thread clean, boil in hot water pot, and remove pot from stove. Add 2 flat tea spoons of baking soda, stir and soak for about 3 minutes until soft. Rinse clean the softened soy bean thread and let it dry, i.e., no drips. Put in a big plate. (2) Chop and thread green onion into 1.5-inch thin pieces.

Seasoning oil: (3) Chop shallot into pieces, fry it with the pepper corn in a small fry pan until the flavor develops. Turn the heat off, remove the fry pan from the stove, and take out the flavored oil only.

Mixing: (4) Thoroughly mix soy bean thread with the seasoning oil, soy sauce paste, sugar, sesame oil, and black mushroom extract. Finally, mix in the threaded green onion piece, cilantro, and white pepper powder.

素香黃金餃 Vegetarian Golden Curry Dumpling

Materials 材料			
Pepperidge Farm Puff Pastry Sheet		1 box	一盒
Textured vegetable protein bits	素碎肉	1 cup (for fillings)	一杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 table spoons	二湯匙
Water	水	1 ¼ cup	1 ¼ 杯
Curry powder	加哩粉	2 tea spoons	二茶匙
Salt	鹽	½ - ¾ tea spoons	½ - ¾ 茶匙
Vegetarian seasoning	素食調味粉	1 tea spoon	一茶匙
Brown sugar syrup	糖漿	¼ cup	¼ 杯
or		or	
Egg yolk	蛋黃	1	一個



Preparation: Mix the protein bits with 1 cup of water and soak it for 10 – 15 minutes.

To prepare the filling: Heat the cooking oil in fry pan; when hot, add in the soaked protein bits, and stir it well with curry powder, salt and vegetarian seasoning. Add in the remaining ¼ cup of water and stir well. Stew it in low heat for about 3 minutes. Turn off the burner and place the cover on the frying pan; let it sit on the burner for another 2 minutes.

To make the dumplings: Cut each pastry sheet into 9 square pieces evenly; these are the skins. Wrap the skins with the filling, and seal it properly. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Brush brown sugar syrup (or egg yolk) on the top skin of each dumpling. Bake the dumplings for 15 minutes. Serve hot.

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素蚵仔羹 Seaweed Nugget Soup

Materials 材料			
Seaweed nugget	素蚵仔羹	1/2 pack	半包
Black mushroom slices	香菇絲	some	少許
Dried lily	金針菇	some	少許
Cilantro	香菜	a little	少許
Shallot	紅蔥	1 piece	一粒
Starch	芡粉	3 tsps	三茶匙
Water	水	3 cups	三杯
Cooking oil	沙拉油	2 tbsps	二湯匙
Soy sauce	醬油	2 tbsps	二湯匙
Rice vinegar	黑米醋	2 tbsps	二湯匙
Vegetarian seasoning	素食調味粉	2 tsps	二茶匙
Salt, sugar	鹽、糖	2 tsps	一茶匙
White pepper	白胡椒	a little	少許



Preparation: Chop the shallot into small pieces; soak the black mushroom slices and the dried lily slices.

Seasoning base: Mix soy sauce, vegetarian seasoning, rice vinegar, salt, and sugar in a saucer, and prepare the starch for thickening.

Cook: Heat the cooking oil in frying pan; add in the chopped shallot pieces, followed by the seaweed nuggets, black mushroom and lily slices; stir it well and add in 3 cups of water. Cook to boiling and add in the seasoning base. Apply starch to thicken it and turn the burner off. At this time, apply white pepper and cilantro. Serve hot.

香菇大蘿蔔湯 Daikon Soup with Shiitake Mushrooms and Bamboo Shoots

材料 Materials		
大蘿蔔	Daikon	一個 1 whole root (c. 2 lbs)
香菇絲	Black (Shiitake) mushroom slices	20 公克 1 oz
天目扁尖筍	Pickled bamboo shoot	40 公克 2 oz
沙拉油	Cooking oil	二湯匙 2 table spoons
鹽	Salt	適量 to taste
素食調味粉	Vegetarian seasoning	適量 to taste
紅蔥	Shallot	少許 A little (1 clove)
白胡椒粉	White pepper powder	少許 A little (dash)
香菜	Cilantro	少許 A little (for garnishing)
水	Water	數杯 Several cups



紅蔥切小粒，天目扁尖筍洗淨泡軟切段，香菇絲泡軟，大蘿蔔切約兩吋方塊。

將燜燒鍋之內鍋加入沙拉油與紅蔥粒於爐上加熱，至油熱冒煙時，倒入適量的水直到不再出油煙為止；先加入切好的蘿蔔、扁尖筍、及香菇絲略炒；繼續加水做湯。此時加入適量的鹽、白胡椒粉、及素食調味粉拌勻。煮至沸騰後，放入燜燒鍋，燜煮兩小時加入香菜即可起鍋。

若不用燜燒鍋，而用一般鍋子，則於湯煮開後，以小火繼續煮一小時即可。

Preparation: Coarsely mince shallot; soak shiitake mushroom slices in warm water until soft; rinse and soak the pickled bamboo shoot and slice into ~1.5" pieces; peel daikon and slice into ~2.0" pieces.

To cook: Saute shallot with oil in the inner piece of the thermal pot until oil begins to smoke. Pour in a cup of water (to bring out the full flavor of the shallot). Add the daikon, shiitake mushrooms, bamboo shoots, enough water for the number of servings, salt and vegetarian seasoning to taste, and white pepper powder. Bring to a boil. Place the inner pot into the thermal container. Let sit for two hours, garnish with cilantro and serve.

If you are using a regular pot instead of a thermal pot, simmer for one hour after boiling.

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